

Message Text

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SUBJECT: COMMITTEE OF 24: US VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOLLOWING IS PORTION OF COMMITTEE OF 24 WORKING PAPER ON
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, ISSUED MAR 24, (A/AC.109/L999) WHICH
DESCRIBES "RELATIONS WITH US VIRGIN ISLANDS":

QUOTE

D. RELATIONS WITH UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

16. ON 1 AUGUST 1974, THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA ANNOUNCED THAT UNDER A PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE IMMIGRATION LAWS WHICH WOULD COME INTO EFFECT ON 9 SEPTEMBER, VISITS OF ALIENS TO THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS AND PUERTO RICO WOULD BE LIMITED TO THE HOLDERS OF NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, CHIEF MINISTER WHEATLEY APPROACHED THE UNITED STATES AUTHORITIES ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, IN THE HOPE THAT THE PROPOSED NON-IMMIGRANT VISA REQUIREMENT WOULD NOT BE APPLICABLE TO THAT TERRITORY. ACCORDING TO THE CHIEF MINISTER'S REPORT ON THE MATTER, HE HAD IMMEDIATELY CONTACTED THE DELEGATE OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS TO THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, WHO, ON HIS OWN INITIATIVE, HAD ALREADY POINTED OUT TO OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT THE HARDSHIP THAT THE PROPOSED VISA REQUIREMENT WOULD PRESENT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, AND THE DELETERIOUS EFFECT IT WOULD HAVE ON RELATIONS BETWEEN THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS AND THE

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UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS.

17. DURING A VISIT TO WASHINGTON, D.C., 5 AND 6 SEPTEMBER, THE CHIEF MINISTER MET WITH THE TWO SENIOR OFFICIALS CONCERNED (INCLUDING THE COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE) TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF THE PROPOSED REQUIREMENT. IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSIONS, HE STRESSED THE SITUATION REGARDING THE TWO TERRITORIES IN TERMS OF THEIR GEOPHICAL PROXIMITY, ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE, SOCIAL INTERRELATIONSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL TIES IN THE INFORMAL SHARING OF CERTAIN SERVICES AND FACILITIES. THE DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FRIENDLINESS AND UNDERSTANDING.

AT THE COMMISSIONER'S SUGGESTION, CONSIDERATION WAS BEING GIVEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF ISSUING IDENTIFICATION CARDS TO BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDERS. THESE CARDS WOULD BE VALID FOR ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS AND PUERTO RICO, BUT NOT TO THE UNITED STATES. IN ASKING FOR A SPECIAL EXEMPTION FOR THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE CHIEF MINISTER PLEDGED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE TERRITORY WOULD NO LONGER BE USED AS A STEPPING STONE FOR ILLEGAL ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES.

18. IN A PUBLICATION ISSUED ON 19 SEPTEMBER, THE GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED ITS DECISION TO RIGIDLY ENFORCE THE TERRITORY'S IMMIGRATION LAW ENACTED IN 1969. A KEY SECTION OF THIS LAW PROVIDES THAT PERSONS ARRIVING

IN THE TERRITORY WITH INTENTION OF PROCEEDING TO THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS WHO ARE NOT IN POSSESSION OF ONWARD TICKETS OR UNITED STATES CONSULAR VISAS WILL BE REFUSED ENTRY.

19. ON 19 OCTOBER, THE GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATORS OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS, TOGETHER WITH SOME 200 REPRESENTATIVES OF VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS THEREOF, ARRIVED IN ROAD TOWN, THE CAPITAL OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS, TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE THIRD ANNUAL FRIENDSHIP DAY, DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN THE TIES BETWEEN THE TWO TERRITORIES. THEY WERE WELCOMED BY THE GOVERNOR, THE CHIEF MINISTER AND THE SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AMONG OTHERS. AS PART OF THE CELEBRATION, OFFICIALS OF THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS HOTEL AND TOURIST ASSOCIATION WERE HOSTS TO THEIR COUNTERPARTS. DURING DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING FUTURE CO-OPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TOURISM, IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS MIGHT BECOME INVOLVED IN THE

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PROGRAMME "VIRGIN ISLANDS CALLING" (AN ORGANIZED PROMOTIONAL TOUR OF SOME 10 CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, SUPPORTED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND HOTELS OF THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS, WHICH HAD PRODUCED BENEFICIAL RESULTS FOR THE TOURIST INDUSTRY). THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION STATED THAT THE BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS COULD OFFER THE VISITOR A DIFFERENT TYPE OF HOLIDAY, AND THAT INTER-ISLAND PACKAGES MIGHT BE BETTER EXPLOITED. ON THESE TWO POINTS AS A BASIS FOR CO-OPERATION, IT WAS AGREED TO SET UP WORKING

COMMITTEES TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF JOINT PARTICIPATION IN
THE PROGRAMME. UNQUOTE
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